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AUTHOR Rosenbaum, Nicole M.
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ABSTRACT

A student's participation on two listserves added new depth and new complexities to her overall learning process. The listserves (one just for her composition class at California State University San Bernardino and one that linked her class to two other composition classes at distant universities) created a community of people who had access to a rich common discourse. The listserves created a space where additional ideas were introduced, things brought up in class were developed, and dialogues between students ensued. The listserves also took some of the control away from the instructors and allowed students to think critically and respond without formal direction. The listserves were also a place for clarification of terms, expression of an individual's ideas, and more lengthy definitions which class time could not accommodate. A sense of community was created through discussions and interactions on the listserves. The listserve community was not without its difficulties. Problems included: not remembering who belonged to which class and which e-mail address; the large quantity of e-mail which the list produced at times; and the possibility for miscommunication between people who were unable to see the visual cues which aided in interpreting meaning in normal face-to-face conversations. (Contains 40 references.) (RS)

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Nicole M. Rosenbaum

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Listserves: Adding New Complexities to the Classroom

ED 422 566

My participation on several listservs this quarter, has added depth and new complexities to my overall learning process. The listserves have created a community of people who have access to a rich common discourse. Interaction of a specific community through computer-mediated listserves broadens and complicates the educational experience. The purpose of this paper is to address the ways that my own experience as well as the experience of my classmates has been complicated in positive and negative ways through my experience of a listserve in addition to a class held in the traditional format.

First, I address the ways listserves open new avenues and directions in class discussion. In regular classes, time is limited, there is only so much that can be discussed, and a few people tend to control the discussion. The listserve creates a space where additional ideas can be introduced, things brought up in class can be developed, and dialogues between students can ensue. There is freedom to narrow down one point and then to develop it in a post which the whole class has access to. Every idea is not guaranteed a response, but the listserve is a place where ideas enter an accepting environment. Second, the listserve has taken some of the control away from the instructors and allowed students to think critically and respond without formal direction. There is a certain amount of control that I, as a member of the listserve, have over the computer-mediated conversation, which I do not have in a regular classroom discussion. Third, the listserve has been a place for clarification of terms, expression of individual's ideas, and more lengthy definitions which class time cannot accommodate. The time constraints and agenda of a normal class session do not allow for careful explanation of each person's thoughts or the definition of complex terms. A listserve, however, is the perfect place for the expansion of ideas and longer explanations which clarify individual opinions. Fourth, a sense of community has

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been created through discussions and interaction on this listserve. The atmosphere is thoughtful, yet casual. Members have been honest about their opinions as well as willing to share ideas and suggestions through personal experiences. These experiences have broadened our knowledge of each other and have often directly related to the discussion at hand. Some issues have been batted around for most of the quarter while others have died almost at conception. All of this has served to make the dialogue rich and complex. The last focus of this paper is to look at the problematic complexities which exist in a listserve environment. The disadvantages of not being face to face with other students is a difficulty that several members of our list have addressed. With so many different people talking, it is difficult to remember who belongs to which class and which e-mail address. Another problem which many participants made reference to, was the large quantity of mail which the list produced at times. The amount of messages was often seen as burdensome and overwhelming. Aside from these mechanical problems, there is greater possibility for miscommunication between people who are unable to see the visual cues, such as body language, which aid in correctly interpreting meaning in normal face to face conversations.

During the spring of 1997, our class participated on two listserves, one which linked the members of our class together and another which linked us with two different campuses who were conducting similar classes. One class was located at North Dakota State University and the other was in Indianapolis at Indiana University - Purdue University. The class in North Dakota, "Composition Theory," was taught by Joan Latchaw, and the class in Indiana, "Teaching Composition: Issues and Approaches," was taught by Susan-Marie Harrington. Our list, "composition-l," was used for discussion which relates to class business or specific texts which the other classes were not engaging, while the larger listserve, called "cyberseminar," was used for discussion of shared texts which connected all of our ideas. The three professors, Jeff Galin, Joan Latchaw, and Susan Marie Harrington, coordinated the listserve as well as some of our readings, so that

we could respond and interact with each other on different levels. The examples for this paper were taken from ninety five pages of discussions from the cyberseminar and approximately forty pages of interclass interaction from our own listserve. I copied interesting posts throughout the quarter and have drawn ties between what people have written and the ways that I see the listserve as a complicating force.

Our two listserves have opened up avenues for new discussion and have expanded the horizons of our ideas on the subject of composition theory. Members of our list weaved the threads of the discussion into new patterns, as questions took different forms and went in new directions. Sometimes the threads were picked up by others and followed, and other times they just existed as a part of the larger discourse. Members of the lists often asked open ended questions which engendered a multitude of discussions and created more pathways for the conversation to continue down. One student ended his post with, "what do you think?" (A.H. 97-01-17), while one of the professors concludes with "Any response?" (J.L. 97-01-21). Jeff Galin ends one of his posts with the following statement,

> This is not a question that I expect you to have an immediate answer for. I pose it as a complicated issue that is unlikely to have an easy solution (97-01-18).

Many posts end with open questions such as these and encourage all types of responses. Only a small percentage of these open-ended questions actually become full-fledged discussions, but the listserve is a place where ideas can be raised and actually have the possibility of growing into discussions. Questions become larger sets of questions, which encourage more critical thinking and interaction rather than resulting in final answers.

Some of the conversational diversions we have worked through on the list came full circle and made it back into the classroom discussion. One example was a discussion on empowerment which turned into a quarter long debate with over thirty five posts on the cyberseminar list alone, directly dealing with the term "empowerment." The discussion bubbled and turned as new members contributed their ideas. The term was defined and

redefined in light of new relating texts and new personal ideas. It is important that this term became such a significant part of our discussion on-line because it was integral to our readings this quarter as well as a related factor in discussions of computer-mediated communication. Faigley, Freire, Aronowitz and Giroux, to name a few, write passionately about empowerment and its relation to the learning process. Articles written by these authors implicitly assume that empowerment is the goal of teachers without clearly defining the term. Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux write in Education Under Siege about radical theorists who have concluded that "under capitalism, schools could never fulfill the goal of social empowerment" (9). There is no discussion about why the schools have empowerment as a goal or what empowerment means in this statement; it is simply referred to as the goal of education. Our on-line discussion of empowerment began with the idea of one person having the ability to give power. One student writes,

> Yes, I agree with the general train of your thoughts. My questions are really addressing the arbitrary statements about teachers 'giving' empowerment to students, i.e. empowering them. I recognize that much of the time the intentions are honorable; I'm skeptical of any person in authority who believes in or espouses their own ability to empower somebody else (M.C. 97-01-17).

This student was the first to voice her wariness of the idea of anyone actually having power to give. Her concerns echoed those of Paulo Freire. He wrote, in an article on adult literacy, about views of knowledge, the digestive and nutritionist concepts. Freire discusses the digestive view as it relates to illiterates in Brazil. They are "starving," in a sense, for knowledge and need words. Words are "deposited" and "man is a passive being, the object of the process of learning to read and write, and not its subject" (Freire 400). The idea of a teacher depositing power into a student is similar to Freire's idea of teachers "filling" students. The "starving" Brazilians who were filled with words is analogous to teachers filling "needy" students. These types of ideas were the beginnings of the empowerment discussion. As the discussion continued, it ranged from ideas about

false-empowerment to the implications for us as teachers, how we felt about being "empowered" as students, and finally rested on some definitions.

While empowerment was being hashed out on the larger list, our in-class list was discussing specifics aspects of texts from class. We started the quarter with a reading by Lester Faigley from Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition. This discussion in class and on-line was dominated by talk about postmodernism as we tried to get a hold on the term as well as relate it to writing and instruction. One student wrote,

> let me pose that postmodernism/postmodern theory is the best darn thing that ever happened to student writers, as long as we as teachers can construct a minimalist framework within which they may work. I like the freedom of postmodernism, but I think a slight regression to the foundation-happy ideas of modernism might serve us well, so students do not freewrite endlessly without some clearly defined goal to attain with their writing (Hartman 97-01-16).

Getting a handle on postmodernism as a term was a big job, but the listserve was a place that we could discuss the implications of postmodernism in the classroom with time to think through the implications of it. One huge advantage of listserve interaction is that complex terms can be discussed and explained at the level of each students' understanding. One student may never have heard of postmodernism while another has already done work with the term. Both students benefit from the experience as the experienced writer teaches the student who has never come across the term before. Another student links postmodernism with empowerment on the in-class list. He writes,

> I have enjoyed reading the discussion on empowerment. I think that teachers are not responsible for student empowerment. Ultimately, students must take charge of their own education. A teacher can expose a wealth of information to her/his students, but to no avail if students apathetically dismiss such knowledge as meaningless. Perhaps encouraging students to an academic state of enlightenment

would better "fit" the Postmodern ideal rather than a more authoritarian sense of "guiding" students to empowerment (B.A. 97-01-22).

Several students expressed a hesitancy to support the fact that teachers had power to give students, and like the above post mentions, many believe that students need to take responsibility for their own education and their own "empowering." These few posts are examples of how the listserv complicated the class discussion and created a place to synthesize the information in much broader terms.

The listserve also functions as a place for additional thoughts to be added to the larger discourse when class time ran out. I have often come up with an idea related to class discussion or an additional question after class. It is rare that all of these thoughts would ever take shape in the form of words and even more rare that they would be addressed by a professor or other students. The listserve, however, was a place for my new ideas and questions. All types of addendum questions and thoughts found a place in our on-line communication. Phrases like, "I wonder," "what do you all think,?" and "this reminds me..." occur frequently. Examples follow,

> Just a thought on M. C.'s comment about J.L.'s idea about how setting high standards is a risk. (S.O. 97-01-27)

> I share your questions about the role of the assignment in a writing class (McGriff 97-01-29)

> What does anyone else think about these questions? Any answers? (McGriff 97-01-29).

> Here's an issue I've been thinking about. (Matthews 97-01-30).

> I found myself wondering about the ideas presented relative to students not liking

writing because they aren't proficient at it. (M.C. 97-01-27).

All of these excerpts show different students exploring their own thoughts and engaging in the process of communicating with each other. Because the listserve is a place where students can explore the thoughts of others, there was an increased depth to the readings and class discussions. In the past, I have read assigned texts and then moved on without taking the process another step forward. This next step involves, putting the pieces of the readings and discussions together. This level of critical thinking is the true goal of any course. When the synthesizing process occurs, meaning is created, however this part of the process is often the most difficult. This quarter I made connections and was engaged because I was able to see what other people were thinking and because I could take my ideas and questions to the next level. The listserve is a place not only to put ideas, but one which elicits response. I was largely engaged in the texts because of personal interaction and dialogue. Texts this quarter found a way into my own reality. The listserve created a meaningful context for my learning process because it gave me freedom to go in different directions. This type of freedom produces positive changes in the classroom structure and allows students to take ownership of discussion.

When students are an integral part of the discourse, they step into the center from the fringes and can participate more fully. This is the second way that the listserve creates depth and complexity. In a listserve students have a role in controlling the classroom and the discussion therein. The traditional classroom, which is usually controlled by one authority figure, is replaced with an environment where students and teachers converse and interact. William Costanzo writes in his chapter from Literacy and Computers,

> Electronic conferencing is said to flatten traditional hierarchies. Even in the classroom, computers divert attention and authority away from the teacher to the text (19).

His point about the focus shifting from the instructor to the text is particularly interesting in light of this quarter's interaction on-line. The text and ideas related were clearly the

center of the on-line discussion. On these listserves, I had a role in directing and controlling the discussion. My thoughts mattered and were important. I remember my amazement at the beginning of this quarter when others actually responded to my questions and in turn questioned me about my questions. From a student's perspective, the listserve was revolutionary. One teacher, Marshall Kremers, writes about his first experience with computer-mediated communication.

> Expecting that my students would follow me in discussion, I found instead that they much preferred to converse with each other, forcing me to the sidelines. I could not imagine that happening in my conventional classroom. No students had ever tried to take over the discussion in all my 20 years of teaching, even during my progressive period, when I arranged the desks in a circle. I had always set the direction, and the students had always done more or less what I wanted (Kremers 113).

Although this teacher was using an on-line network, the principle is similar to that of a listserve. The students have a large role in what is said and which direction the discussion takes. Instructors are free to add information and their own questions, but are not the sole directors of the conversation. The three professors of our classes contributed in a variety of ways on our listserve. They were the leaders of the class who, in the end gave out grades, but they did not manipulate the discussion. An interesting discussion ensued on-line in regards to what title was used when addressing the professors and if the different titles somehow discounted the decenteredness of our classes. Some believed that it was important to call all three professors by their first names because it gave students equal footing, while others argued that they felt more comfortable using "Dr." when addressing any professor. The result of the discussion was that students feel differently about how they should address a professor and it remains an individual preference.

Despite the fact that they were referred to as "Dr." by some, the three professors were not a controlling force on the listserve. At times this quarter, one of the professors intervened to spur on the discussion or to shed new light on a subject. At the beginning of the empowerment discussion J.G. wrote,

> I decided to compose a long note on the history of the term empowerment and then upload it to the list. I don't like to post so much text on-line, but decided it would at least offer some common background for using the term (97-01-20).

This description was part of the extensive research that J.G. had done for his dissertation and it served as a background definition which illuminated our readings and engendered a great deal of discussion. All three of the professors referred to their graduate experiences and shared insight into different authors or ideologies, but most of their posts were similar to those which were posted by everyone else. It took me over half of the quarter to realize that S.H. was the professor of the class in Indiana.

Our listserve can be seen as a decentralized environment because the instructors' ideas were not the focal point of discussion. I did not wait for cues from the three professors before I sent a post. Their presence was definite and I knew that they were reading my messages, but I saw their role as facilitative in the sense that they responded much more than they began new discussions. A large number of their posts were responses to students' responses and questions to readings which usually ended with even more questions for students to consider. Because the three professors were not dominating forces on-line, the students had options and could choose what they wanted to discuss, or could choose to participate as a reader only. Diana George writes that "empowerment is a way of returning control to students" (312). In this light, empowerment is closely related to the issues of decentralization. Recent scholarship on the subject of empowerment points to the fact that the struggle for empowerment "is not a struggle between the single teacher and the single student but a struggle that occurs within a political, social, and

historical context" (George 312). Students are not up against a single teacher in hopes that they will find their own voices; they are working, often, against our entire society as it has been constructed throughout the years. The teachers, who have been constructed themselves, are directly influencing and thus constructing, students. A post from the composition-l list gave one student's view.

> Well I enjoyed discussions in class about do teachers really feel that they can construct their students, and what is the students role in their writing. Teachers can't honestly believe that students are their canvas and that we have the right or the power to construct them. Yes we have the power to grade them, but ultimately they construct their learning, and what about writing is important them (K.F. 97-01-24).

This post is similar to the majority agreement that teachers do not have the ability to either completely construct or empower their students.

The third way that listserves make class discussion complex is through clarification. Time in class can in no way allow for clarification of all types of terms and individual's thoughts. Because the issues that we worked through were complex, there was often confusion about terms, ideologies, individual opinions, and even what individuals meant when they posted messages.

> Perhaps I should clarify my stance on grammar here, while I have the chance. I never said grammar was unimportant; I was decrying a singular focus upon it... (A.H. 97-02-11).

This student was misunderstood yet had the opportunity to clarify his stand on grammar because the listserve is a place where people can ask, "what do you mean?" and get a response. The example of J. G.'s vignette on empowerment is another example of clarification. It would have taken a significant amount of class time to outline all of what he had to say about empowerment and yet it became accessible to everyone on-line

because of the listserve. A listserve is like an overflow room in this sense. Terms can be defined and explained to those who have not encountered them previously, and background on authors or figures in the field can serve to create a larger framework for the discussion. Students are often at different points in their graduate education and so have much to offer each other. Those who are already several classes into the program have a body of knowledge that they can share and students who are relatively new to the field and/or the program can contribute a fresh perspective.

Our two listserves created two mini-communities of which I became an automatic member. I choose the word community because there are several ways which our discourse can be seen as communal. Although most of the posts sent to our listserve were ones that did not elicit direct responses from other individuals, many did function in a dialectical manner. Many posts were directed to one person or to several people who had been wrestling with a particular problem. Posts often referred to something that was posted earlier or to something that a person said in class. For instance, D.K.M. writes,

> A., to respond to your message,... (D.K.M. 97-01-17)

This quote is one example of the many posts which were specifically addressed to one person and what they had either shared in class or posted on-line. My own posts often brought in a few responses which directly addressed what I had written. Another student writes,

> Well, I will just jump right into this 'empowerment' debate and will respond to M.C.'s inquiry about "false empowerment" (J.A. 97-01-17).

In this case, the writer is contributing to a topic which is a dialogue involving many people and not necessarily in response to one person although M.C.'s "false empowerment" seems to be a central part of this response. At the time of this post there was a fairly complex discussion going on about empowerment, but this student was free to jump in when she signed on to the list. She was a member and her opinions mattered even though

she had not been involved with the discussion from the beginning. Another example of the dialogue follows.

> You've re-stated my positions quite nicely. We disagree, I think, about the utility of bell curves (S.H. 97-01-20)

This last example is more exemplary of the type of posting which occurred between two people discussing a single topic. Two people going back and forth was another type of common occurrence on our listserve. This is dialectic in the sense that the discussion went back and forth so that meaning could be checked, understood, and then ultimately more questions were raised. What truly made these posts dialectic was that every member of the listserve had access to them. We were all a part of the process and we each contributed even if it was not in the tangible shape of a response. The space of the listserve belonged to everyone.

The dialectic nature of the listserve community was also demonstrated in the way members shared personal experiences. Class discussions do this to varying degrees, but it is difficult to share the sheer volume of information in class that can be shared on-line. Individual teaching experiences, past readings, or knowledge of a particular subject can add a new dimension to any given discussion. The shared experiences ranged from our professors talking about their interaction with authors that we read, to experienced teachers sharing helpful suggestions with new teachers. Personal experiences are an important resource for students to tap into, and this is just another example of how the listserve deepens and benefits the learning process.

Another example of how listserves form a type of community is the way that e-mail can be distributed without any overlap between speakers. Each student has a chance to compose a thought and send it without being interrupted by another. There was no competition involved in getting my ideas out via e-mail whereas in class I usually had to work to share my opinions. The listserve can also help foster equality for different types of students who have a difficult time speaking out in class. Mary Flores and Cynthia Selfe

write from the feminist perspective and deal with the competition/community dichotomy. They demonstrate how women have traditionally not been able to share their views in the classroom as readily as men have. Whether women do not want to interrupt or whether they do not get called on, they generally do not have the same opportunity as men do to make contributions to discussion. This is also true of ESL students who are still acculturating and struggling with the new language. It is difficult for many types of students to be heard above the voices of a few who tend to dominate. Selfe writes in her article "Technology in the English Classroom: Computers through the Lens of Feminist Theory," that computer-mediated communication accomplishes two things:

> first, by making it possible for individuals who might otherwise be prevented from contributing to a discussion to do so; and second, by facilitating conversations within dialogic groups that would otherwise find such conversations so cumbersome or slow as to be less than worthwhile at all (123).

Competition is diluted because there is a more open access to the medium of communication. Students may still be a part of a competitive field, but they can see themselves as part of a larger whole.

The listserve community is not without its difficulties, and in several ways the communication was complicated this quarter because of the listserves. Mechanical problems received the most attention in on-line posts. Several people posted messages about the difficulties of communicating without face to face contact. It was even more problematic when three classes, which were not acquainted, interacted on a regular basis. It was often difficult to associate a person with the university that they belonged to and even more problematic that e-mail addresses did not always contain the name of the participant. One student writes,

> I'm not sure how to verbalize exactly how I feel. Maybe some of you can help

me with this. When I read e-mail I don't get a good sense of who everyone else is. Bits and pieces of personality come out in the postings, but it is nothing like sitting in a classroom. A classroom is 3-D. E-mail is flat. When I get something from K., M., or M., I feel as though I understand the intentions and the messages sent. I know them. When I get postings from those who I don't have personal contact, I always try to put a face on your facelessness.. I feel I've lost something very important, the human element (M.S. 97-02-20).

This post sums up what many expressed. The difficulty of really understanding another person because of the fact that they are just typed letters and numbers on a screen is a real disadvantage, especially in our case with the three classes interacting. It was difficult to really communicate without the human element. To deal with this problem, in part, we decided to post an introduction at the beginning of the quarter. It was to include our name, university, and some personal and academic interests. This was a good start and a partial answer to the problem, but once posts started coming it was difficult to distinguish between students. Our second attempt to keep the three classes straight was offered when we decided to post the abbreviation of our university below our name at the end of each post. The element of human interaction on listserve communication is an important complexity which should be considered when a listserve is added as part of a curriculum. It cannot serve as the only medium for communication, but taken with the whole can be truly beneficial.

Another difficulty in regards to participating on a listserve is the quantity of mail which members of a list receive on a daily basis. Many students expressed feeling overwhelmed at the sheer number of posts they received each day. One student writes,

I, like many other people it seems, am also overwhelmed with the number of e-mail messages I receive everyday. It's virtually impossible for me to read

through them all. In fact, I just deleted several messages without even reading them yet because I intend to retrieve them using the instructions Joan posted. I just got tired of having 250 messages staring at me when I did get on the list (S.O. 97-02-21).

It is difficult enough for students who have the opportunity to go through their electric mail throughout the day or at least several times a week, but many students do not have the luxury of working on-line at home. They have to use computer labs at school which usually means trying to respond to each message in a short amount of time, fighting the crowds in the computer labs, and squeezing in extra time before or after classes. Within the next decade this will more than likely not be a problem as more and more people are purchasing their own computers, but it is something that remains a consideration today.

Further complicating this is the case of the listserve which requires participation as part of the grade. A few students voiced their concerns about being graded for their on-line interaction. Some felt that the amount of work did not correlate to the percentage of the grade. Those who did not have access to the lists at home felt that they had an unfair disadvantage because they were being graded for their participation. In another light, this can be seen as similar to in-class participation grades. A person who never responds on-line is not going to get the full credit for a participation grade, but the same is true of someone who never speaks up in a regular class without a listserve. Listserves are just another way for students to participate as well as another way for students to be graded. Those who have a hard time speaking up in class can use the listserve to express their ideas and those who feel really uncomfortable with the technology are welcomed to be more vocal in class, although the goal is for everyone to participate in all discussions. It is important to realize that all students are different. What has been a rich learning experience for me seems to have been an added burden for other members of our list.

The question of participating in class and its relation to joining the listserv discussion was an issue that came up in class as well as on-line. One member posited that silence in class may have some kind of corollary with the amount that person had to say electronically. No clear correlation could be agreed upon, but several people expressed their hesitancy or the difficulty they had of speaking up in class, while posting their thoughts on the listserve seemed much more natural. One student shared her opinion on the subject.

> As for the correlation between e-mail and silence, this is also my first time on a listserv and using e-mail. While I don't respond frequently I feel more comfortable doing so on the list (K.F. 97-02-26)

The theme of her post is that people who are quiet should not be seen as not having anything to say or not interested, but she also enforced the argument that, for her, the listserve was a safe place to communicate. A person who is composing an e-mail post has time to think, write, and revise; benefits which speech does not afford. Duin and Hansen write in their chapter from Literacy and Computers, that

> networks offer a convenient facility for students and instructors to respond to texts. In particular, those networks that grant students time to reflect before responding give them the chance to contribute to meaning making through written dialogue over a length of time (103).

Students do not "make meaning" in the exact same ways, and while one student can quickly organize their thoughts, another needs time to process. The pressures of time do not impose on a person who is composing a post, whereas quickly moving class discussion leaves no time for dawdling. Duin and Hansen's article goes on to say that computer-mediated communication can ultimately provide opportunities for the development of literacy. One student writes about her own experience in class discussions and on the listserve,

> I have to respond to the discussion on silent students, especially because I am one, as J.L. already knows. First of all, I am silent in class partially because it takes me a while to let things people say in class sink in, especially if it's something I'm not too familiar with. If it's something I've experienced or know something that I could contribute, I do. However, if I don't have a strong background in what is being said, I need to mull it over in my mind before I can think of something worthwhile to say (S.O. 97-03-05).

This student was facilitated by the unconstrained nature of electric mail. It gave her time to think through her ideas and a place to put them once she had done so. The competition to communicate on-line does not exist in the same way that it does in face to face conversations. Like this student mentioned in her post, e-mail affords time to mull over thoughts whereas class time does not. In classroom discussion, those who do not speak up loudly and confidently, are going to be passed by.

From another point of view, time does move quickly on the listserve. If someone posts a question, it is likely that several people will respond within two days of that original post and those posts will follow different threads. A person who is late in responding to the first question will be contributing to a discussion that is over. A person who waits too long will be responding to old news. This is part of the frustration that some people felt regarding the quantity of mail this quarter. If you did not act quickly and respond when you received a post, you were left behind.

This phenomenon also can happen in the classroom. I have experienced being left behind many times during graduate school. Discussion moves quickly and a person who takes time to synthesize their thoughts or even to wait for a pause in the conversation may never get the chance to share. Discussions can move at breakneck speeds and topics can switch quickly so that it becomes difficult to interject. The time factor cannot be avoided, and either way people are not going to express all of their ideas. Listserves simply present students with another avenue for communication. Teachers must seriously consider how

they can create different opportunities for different types of students to share their ideas and participate.

The listserve is not an end-all method for teachers, but I see it as extraordinarily useful as an extension for classroom discussion. Listserves allow for a greater variety of students to contribute to class discussion. It is another way that students can contribute and can be evaluated. Just like journal responses, class presentations, in-class essays, and final papers evaluate different characteristics of a student's work, the listserve is another way that a student can be involved in the class. The more diverse the requirements for class work are, the greater likelihood that most students will be able to shine as individuals. One student who thoroughly enjoys class discussion and can think quickly will do well with the in-class participation part of his or her grade. Another student may be intimidated by the discussion but may really enjoy writing so he or she will do well with the written portion of the required work. It is the job of teachers to structure classes in such a way that all types of students will be able to participate and have the potential to do well.

My experience with the listserve has been exceptional, and it has greatly enriched my learning process. I have interacted with people who share my passions and who have challenged me to deal with the readings. I have had to defend my own views and have had the opportunity to reflect on other's views. The experience has been full for me because I have had personal interaction with other people who are interested and engaged in the ideas that I am dealing with. I have synthesized readings and ideas in a process this quarter. I have become a part of the field of composition studies. I am not just a student who has read about the subject, nor one who is simply fulfilling a requirement. I am a member of the community. I have a voice and the listserves have given me a place where I can use it.

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